



FOH

Federal Occupational Health
a component of the US Public Health Service



Recognizing and Managing Stress during the Holidays

The holiday season is a wonderful time of year. But it can also be a stressful time. A certain amount of daily stress is normal; however, holiday shopping, social commitments, and family responsibilities can compound stress resulting in fatigue, burnout, and possibly even depression. Often people take on too much and have a tough time balancing their schedules during this time of year.

Following are some practical and effective tips for managing stress during the holidays.

Recognize the Signs of Stress

First and foremost you should learn to recognize the symptoms of stress so you can better manage it. Some signals that will alert you to excessive stress include:

- difficulty sleeping
- decreased satisfaction with tasks
- constant feeling of urgency
- tension headaches, backaches, stomach aches or other physical discomforts

Managing Stress during the holidays

Prioritize Your Time

Separate what you want to accomplish into two lists that include everything from chores to social activities – and remember to include leisure activities. On one sheet list the less pleasant activities that you know you must do. On the other sheet, list the more enjoyable activities that you'd like to do. Then, combine the two lists by interchanging "must do's" with "want to do's", making sure that you prioritize the "must do's" and include time for enjoyable activities. This way, you can be productive, still have a good time, and avoid holiday burn-out.

Avoid Procrastinating

While some responsibilities can seem overwhelming, putting them off until the last minute will just simply make it worse. Try breaking big projects into little tasks, and they will feel more manageable. Then, incorporate these smaller tasks as separate items on your "to do" lists and be sure to cross off each completed task as you accomplish it. You'll feel more productive as you see your list shrink!

Ask For Help

There's nothing wrong with asking for help when responsibilities seem unmanageable. Enlist the help of a friend to help accomplish your tasks. Little things like asking someone to pick up some items for you while they're at the store can be a big time saver.

Take Advantage of "Down Time"

Use your "to do" list to organize your shopping trips during slow times at the stores. You can either fight the traffic and the crowds all day Saturday and Sunday at the mall or you can schedule a two-hour trip during the week in the early morning or mid-afternoon and

————— **healthy bodies**

sound minds

a safe place to work —————



FOH

Federal Occupational Health
a component of the US Public Health Service



probably get more accomplished.

Laugh Away Tension

A good laugh gives your body, heart, lungs, and stomach a healthy workout. It can relieve stress just as well as taking a nap does. Try to look for the humor in stressful situations – tell a joke, find reasons to laugh – and you'll start to feel less stressed.

Set Limits

Make sure your expectations for the holiday season are realistic and practical. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. And remember to schedule time for breaks. It's important to make time for yourself. Don't feel obligated to accept every party invitation; be choosy! Spend time with people whose company you enjoy.

Getting Help

If you would like more information, you can call your EAP at 800-222-0364. To find out what services are available, check your employee benefits or call your local human services agency. You can also talk with someone you can trust, such as a doctor or nurse, local mental health professional or member of the clergy.

This material was developed exclusively at private expense by Magellan Behavioral Health and its subcontractors and constitutes limited rights data/restricted computer software consistent with the provisions of FAR 52.227-14. Use of this material is authorized in connection with EAP services provided by Magellan Behavioral Health under contract no. 232-01-0021 and conveys no additional rights beyond those noted here.

© 1999-2005 Magellan Health Services, Inc.

————— **healthy bodies**

sound minds

a safe place to work —————